

U.S. PATENT APPLICATION
for
Removable Media Storage Compartment

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Removable Media Storage Compartment

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The invention relates generally to media storage compartments, and more particularly to removable media storage compartments mounted to a vehicle roof area in a vehicle interior.

Background of the Invention

[0002] After-market compact disc (CD) storage devices that attach to a vehicle sun visor are presently known. One such storage device is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,762,246, which is incorporated herein by reference. Storage compartments of this variety are typically attached to the vehicle sun visor to provide stowage and retrieval of CDs when the vehicle sun visor is in the lowered position. However, CD storage devices of this variety may suffer from various disadvantages. For example, a CD storage device that is attached to a vehicle sun visor may be visible within the vehicle passenger area, thus detracting from the overall appearance of the vehicle interior. Additionally, to facilitate easy removal and installation, conventional CD storage devices are typically loosely coupled to the vehicle sun visor with simple fasteners such as elastic bands, which may cause the CD storage compartment to unintentionally misalign.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The storage compartment of the invention includes a base configured to be attached to a passenger compartment side portion of a vehicle roof. The storage compartment further includes a portable member that has at least one pocket. The portable member is configured for releasable engagement with the base.

[0004] Another aspect of the present invention relates to a portable media storage device. The storage device includes a support member that has a front surface and a back surface. The front surface of the support member includes at least one pocket.

The support member is configured to releasably engage with a base recessed within a passenger compartment side portion of a vehicle roof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and together with the description serve to explain principles of the invention.

[0006] Figure 1 is a top view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0007] Figure 2 is a side view of the storage compartment of Figure 1;

[0008] Figure 3 is a perspective view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0009] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] Figure 5 is a perspective view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0011] Figure 6 is a side view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0012] Figure 7 is a cross sectional perspective view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0013] Figure 8 is cross sectional side view of the storage compartment of Figure 7;

[0014] Figure 9 is a side view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0015] Figure 10 is a top view of a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0016] Figure 11 is a top view of a base of the storage compartment of Figure 10;

[0017] Figure 12 top view of a portable member of the storage compartment of Figure 10; and

[0018] Figure 13 is bottom perspective view of the base of the storage compartment of Figure 10.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Reference will now be made in detail to presently preferred embodiments of the invention. Wherever possible, the same reference numbers will be used throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts. The following description will describe various embodiments useable in a vehicle, such as a car, a consumer truck, a commercial truck, a van, a sport utility vehicle, and other vehicles. Other applications may also be plausible, as will be readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art after reading this disclosure.

[0020] As shown in Figures 1 and 2, a storage compartment according to an embodiment of the present invention includes a base 110 and a portable member 120. The base 110 may be formed of a durable material, such as a plastic or polymeric material, and may have an oblong or oval shape. The base 110 includes a lower surface 205 and an edge 215. The edge 215 is disposed along a periphery of the lower surface 205 and projects outwardly from the lower surface 205. The base 110 is adapted to be mounted to a roof of a passenger compartment of a vehicle. For example, the base 110 may include an attachment mechanism 190 disposed on an underside of the base 110, as shown in Figure 2. The attachment mechanism 190 may include various mechanical fasteners. For example, the base 110 may include interlocking clips (or tabs) configured to engage with corresponding fasteners disposed on the roof. Other modes of attachment may also be contemplated. For example, the base 110 may be attached to the roof using an adhesive material.

[0021] The base 110 is configured to releasably engage with the portable member 120. According to an embodiment of the present invention, the lower surface 205 of the base 120 may include fasteners (not shown) adapted to releasably engage with corresponding fasteners disposed on an underside of the portable member 120. The fasteners may be, for example, magnetic fasteners, snaps, or interlocking clips/tabs. In this manner, a user may install the portable member 120 in the base 110 when the user is in the vehicle. When the user exits the vehicle, the portable member 120 may be disengaged from the base 110 and carried with the user to his or her final destination. Thus, the portable member 120 may be removed from the base 110 to allow the user to transport items between the vehicle and another location.

[0022] The portable member 120 has a shape corresponding to the shape of the base 110, as shown in Figure 1. The portable member 120 includes at least one media storage slot (or pocket) 130 configured to store one or more types of media 10, such as a compact disc (CD), a digital video disc (DVD), a mini-disc, a cassette, or other recorded media, therein. For illustration purposes, CDs are shown throughout the figures. The portable member 120 may include more than one media storage slot 130. For example, the portable member 120 may include a plurality of slots 130 arranged to allow the media 10 stored therein to be stowed and removed from the slots 130. For example, as shown in Figure 1, the slots 130 may be aligned (or stacked) one upon the other in an offset manner such that a portion of each slot is exposed relative to a consecutive slot. Thus, a portion of each slot 130 is accessible to receive the media 10. When configured in such a manner, the slots 130 form a substantially planar body corresponding to the shape of the portable member 120. It should be appreciated that other configurations are also plausible, such as having the openings for one or more of slots 130 facing different directions (e.g., for different types of media stored therein).

[0023] Additionally, a storage area (or pouch) 140 may be provided on the portable member 120. The storage area 140 may be configured to stow various items, such as sunglasses, garage door openers, keys, cellular phones, maps, pens/pencils, or other items, therein. The storage area 140 may be formed of netting/mesh or transparent type material to allow a vehicle occupant to view the items stowed within the storage area 140.

[0024] Figure 3 shows a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiment except that the portable member 120 has a slightly different shape than the previous embodiment and includes a greater number of slots 130. Additionally, the storage compartment includes a cover 150 configured to operatively retain and protect the media 10 stored in the portable member 120. The cover 150 may be coupled to the base 110 by a hinge positioned along a first elongated side 200 of the base 110, as shown in Figure 3. The cover 150 is moveable between an open position and a closed position. In the closed position (not shown), a distal (or non-hinged) edge 220 of the

cover is disposed adjacent to a second elongated side 210 of the base 110 such that the cover 150 shields or protects the slots 130. In operation, the cover 150 is opened by moving the distal edge 220 of the cover 150 away from the second elongated edge 210 of the base 110. In the open position (shown in Figure 3), the media storage slots 130 are exposed. Alternatively, it is contemplated that the cover 150 may be formed as a slide cover (not shown) adapted to engage the elongated sides 200 and 210 of base 110 to provide translational movement between the cover 150 and the base 110.

[0025] Figure 4 shows a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except that the portable member 120 has a slightly different shape and fewer slots 130. Additionally, the base 110 is adapted to be recessed within a roof of a passenger compartment of a vehicle. For example, the vehicle may include a headliner 230 extending from a roof of a vehicle body generally toward the passenger compartment. The headliner 230 defines an interior surface of the roof of the passenger compartment. The base 110 may be recessed within the headliner 230 such that the storage compartment does not substantially extend or protrude into the passenger compartment. In this manner, the storage compartment 100 is visually and functionally desirable. Moreover, the recessed configuration enables the storage compartment to be disposed in the roof near a sun visor 180 such that the storage compartment may be concealed from view when the sun visor is in a stored position (not shown). Thus, the aesthetics of the vehicle are improved over that of a vehicle having a conventional aftermarket storage device mounted to the sun visor.

[0026] Figure 5 shows a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except the storage compartment includes a cover fashioned as a strap 250. The strap 250 may be, for example, an elastic member. In a closed position, the strap 250 is configured to extend from a first end of the base 110 to a second end of the base 110. In this manner, the strap 250 extends over the slots 130 to retain and protect the media 10 stored in the slots 130. Other configurations, such as zippered or snap down covers, are also contemplated and will be readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art after reading the disclosure.

[0027] Figure 6 shows a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except the base 110 includes locating members 260 which project from an underside of the base 110 and are configured to engage with corresponding apertures disposed on the roof so that the base 110 may be properly positioned or aligned on the roof.

[0028] Figures 7 and 8 show a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except the edge 215 of the base 110 may include a C-channel 255 formed along an inner periphery of the edge 215, as shown in Figure 7. The C-channel 255 is configured to receive a peripheral portion of the portable member 120. According to this embodiment, the edge 215 encompasses only three sides of the base 110 so that the portable member 120 may slide into and out of the base 110. Additionally, according to this embodiment, the base 110 is recessed in the headliner 230 such that an upper surface of the edge 215 is substantially coplanar (or flush) with the interior surface of the headliner 230, as shown in Figure 8. Thus, the storage compartment is visually and functionally unobtrusive because the storage compartment does not substantially protrude into the passenger compartment. In addition, as shown in Figure 8, the lower surface 205 of the base 110 may slope upward from a first end of the base 110 to a second end of the base 110, as shown in Figure 8. The sloped surface enables a user to slidably engage and disengage the portable member 120 and the base 110 when the base 110 is recessed in a vehicle headliner 230 or roof. Thus, the portable member 120 may be removed from the base 110 to allow the user to transport items between the vehicle and another location.

[0029] Figure 9 shows a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except that fasteners 290 disposed on an underside of the portable member 290 are illustrated. The fasteners 290 are adapted to releasably engage with the corresponding fasteners disposed on the lower surface 205 of the base 110 (as discussed above). The fasteners 290 may be, for example, hook and loop type fasteners such as VELCRO® (shown in Figure 9), magnetic fasteners, snaps, or interlocking clips/tabs.

[0030] Figures 10 to 13 show a storage compartment according to another embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is similar to the previous embodiments except the shape of the base 110 may be, for example, rectangular or trapezoidal. According to this embodiment, the base 110 may include holes 225 (shown in Figures 11 and 13) for attaching the base 110 to the roof. Each hole 225 is configured to receive a screw (not shown). The screw can then be threaded into the roof to secure the base 110 to the roof. The base 110 may also include retaining members (or fingers) 235, as shown in Figures 10 and 11, for locating and retaining the portable member 120 in the base 110. The retaining members 235 are disposed on an upper surface of the edge 215 on one side of the base 110. The retaining members 235 project beyond the edge 215 toward an opposite side of the base 110. In this manner, the retaining members 235 comprise an extension of the upper surface of the edge 215. In operation, a user may locate and retain the portable member 120 in the base 110 (as shown in Figure 10) by positioning an edge of the portable member 120 in the base 110 under the retaining members 235 and then lowering an opposing edge of the portable member 120 into the base 110. The opposing edge of the portable member 120 may then be engaged with fasteners disposed on the lower surface 205 of the base 110. For example, as shown in Figure 11, the opposing edge of the portable member 120 may engage with snaps 245 disposed along the edge 215 of the base 110.

[0031] Thus, methods and apparatuses for storing items in a vehicle according to various embodiments of the present invention have been described. Modifications and variations may be made to the techniques and structures described and illustrated herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. By way of example, various embodiments may be mounted above a driver side of a vehicle interior, a passenger side of the vehicle interior, or between the driver and passenger sides of the vehicle interior. Accordingly, it should be understood that the methods and apparatus described herein are illustrative only and are not limiting upon the scope of the invention.